

Welcome From the FISSEA Executive Board Chair

So, another “FISSEA Year” comes to an end, or if you look at it another way, another one is just beginning here at the annual Conference. I want to take just a few minutes and discuss “The State of FISSEA” and review the past year.

FISSEA continues to grow, and by any measure, seems to be perfectly healthy. The membership is over 1400 people strong. The online membership – those members who opted to be subscribed to the FISSEA membership’s e-mail list – is over 700. As your presence here indicates, the annual Conference is still the flagship event of the year. We are back to offering a three-day Conference, and we look forward to your Conference evaluations to tell us if this is a good thing for you. We still conduct two or three free workshops each year. All in all, FISSEA continues to be a viable organization in the information security awareness, awareness training, role-based training, education, and certification (of information security professionals) arena.

One issue that we continue to wrestle with is the nature of our organization. We are an all-volunteer entity. The only members who have FISSEA-related work as part of their performance plan – as far as I know – are Peggy Himes and me, as we are the NIST Liaison to FISSEA function here in the NIST Computer Security Division. Everyone else – Executive Board members and those members who volunteered to serve on the FISSEA Communications Committee – are doing this work as they can fit it in to their work day. Naturally, when work “gets in the way” of the FISSEA volunteer’s work, that which pays the bills usually trumps the volunteer effort. It’s a fact of life and there is no getting away from it. All we can do is have some form of contingency plan at the ready so when a key member is swamped with work or otherwise not available, others can fill the void.

This past year saw the standing up of the FISSEA Communications Committee. It is made up of volunteers from the membership and will help the Executive Board with outreach, publicity, newsletter, website, and other efforts to spread the FISSEA name and reputation.

FISSEA was also represented on the Information Systems Security Line of Business (ISS LOB) Tier 2 Role-Based Training Working Group, one of the dozen LOBs being stood up by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). The next year should see this role-based training initiative bear some fruit for the federal sector.

We may see the Executive Board Chair and/or Assistant Chair positions filled by other than federal employees for the first time, if the proposed Bylaw changes are accepted by you. I feel, and my NIST management feels, comfortable if this happens. We have been fortunate in recent years that those private sector Executive Board members come to Board meetings wearing their FISSEA hats, and have FISSEA’s best interests in mind. I have seen no instances of a non-federal Board member bringing their organization’s agenda to the table, and I expect this will continue, even if a non-federal Board members

becomes Board Chair or Assistant Chair. Naturally, the NIST Liaison to FISSEA can (and will) offer recommendations if this trend seems to change. Our focus has always been, and will continue to be, doing what is good for the FISSEA membership.

Well, my tour here as Executive Board Chair is nearly complete. My handlers – that would be my management here at NIST – suggested a year ago that a year as Chair might be a good thing, and looking back I cannot disagree (too much). I want to thank Louis Numkin, former Board Chair and current Conference Director, for his insights over the past year. Special thanks to Colonel Will Suchan for fighting the good fight as Conference Program Chair, despite his taking on a second job at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, and watching his staff drop from five pairs of boots to one. Thanks, too, to the Current Board members for serving and for pitching in and helping during “crunch time.” Thanks also go out to the members who answered the request for help in forming the Communications Committee.

Enjoy the Conference, and please tell us what you liked and didn't like about it, and tell us how we can help meet your needs.